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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

Reaching the poorest

1. Every year the International Movement ATD Fourth World has high expectations of the UNICEF Executive Board session. This is particularly so this year, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child becoming international law, and with the promises made by heads of State or Government to the children of the world at the World Summit for Children last year.

2. The world community is now bound by those promises to its children that they will have "first call" on the world's resources in good times as well as bad.

3. "The children look up to the adult world. They look at us with trust. This is even truer for children in poverty because they expect everything from the adults. They believe that people don't want war, torture, hunger or injustice. We cannot deceive them. Because of the expectations children have of us, we are forced to refuse that any child be unhappy." These were the words of the late Father Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), founder of ATD Fourth World. Having experienced extreme poverty himself as a child, Joseph Wresinski knew that the poorest children most often have last place on their nations' agendas. The Movement he founded with families in situations of extreme poverty has pledged to focus the attention of the world on its most forgotten children and their families.

4. As early as 1978, Joseph Wresinski appealed to UNICEF to be the advocate for all the world's poor children, in the North as in the South, in the East as in the West. Throughout the years, ATD Fourth World has called upon the world community and each nation and agency to give priority to the poorest and to enlist their participation. In 1989, UNICEF took an important step in this direction through its decision 1989/8 on "Reaching the poorest". For the

first time, it was clearly acknowledged that "a significant percentage of the world's population, including children and mothers, has not yet been reached". The resolution also states that "a more thorough knowledge of their situation and living conditions and of the preconditions necessary for their partnership will make reaching them easier".

5. The non-governmental organization (NGO) community understood the importance of this decision and the urgency of its application and follow-up. It was the focus of the 1990 NGO Forum organized by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. ATD Fourth World contributed its experience and that of other NGOs through a working paper describing why the poorest are not reached and conditions under which they could be.

6. We were very pleased to see that the report on The State of the World's Children 1991, in the chapter on principles of success, appeals for new priority to be accorded to services for the most disadvantaged and for the development of a more precise monitoring process more likely to lead to a reaching out to the unreached.

7. We, therefore, recommend that UNICEF cooperation with Governments and NGOs should lead to the establishment of a monitoring process in which the poorest and most disadvantaged families would participate, and that UNICEF be asked to identify and analyse actions that can reveal the conditions necessary for the participation and advancement of children living in extreme poverty.

8. The International Movement ATD Fourth World invites all delegations to come and see these children's messages at the Tapori Travelling Peace Exhibit in the Visitors' Lobby of the United Nations from 19 April to 5 May under the sponsorship of UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF.